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TAGS: PREL PGOV PBTS KINR FAID ECON EUN GO XH
SUBJECT: GEORGIA: A/S FRIED ENCOURAGES EU TO DO MORE

REF: USEU 1120

Classified By: Christopher Davis, Political Minister-Counselor for reasons 1.4(d) and (e)

¶1. (C/NF) Summary: EUR Assistant Secretary Dan Fried emphasized to a group of EU Political and Security Committee (PSC) Ambassadors that the situation in Georgia was growing increasingly tense. He noted U.S. support for a German-drafted Western Friends' three-phase plan to reach a settlement to the Abkhazia conflict and highlighted opportunities for the EU to play an increased role in implementing the proposals. PSC officials emphasized the EU's increased attention to Georgia and explained that member states would soon decide on an options paper for increased engagement there. The Ambassadors raised concerns about balancing competing interests with regard to Russia and queried Fried on the impact of Georgia and Ukraine moving closer to NATO. Separately, A/S Fried briefed Council Secretariat DirGen Robert Cooper on the Quad meeting and highlighted specific steps the West should consider taking to support the German plan as well as options in the face of Russian attempts to block it. Cooper observed that "the problem resides in Moscow" and thought Berlin could exert powerful influence on the Kremlin by hinting at consideration of support for Georgia MAP. End Summary.

Cooper: The Problem Resides in Moscow

¶2. (C/NF) In a July 22 meeting accompanied by Ambassador Silverberg, A/S Fried and Robert Cooper EU Council Secretariat Director General exchanged readouts of the Quad and the GAERC discussions of Georgia held earlier the same day (reftel). Cooper noted that German FM Steinmeier's "information point" on the Western Friends of Georgia negotiations proposal had sparked an unfocused debate among EU Foreign Ministers without leading to a concrete plan. Ministers expressed frustration and a feeling of growing danger. "Steinmeier's plan was reasonable, the situation in Georgia was not." Cooper noted that "the problem resided in Moscow with its creeping annexation (of Abkhazia) and provocations." This had made it all the more difficult for the EU, as "an enlightenment organization" to handle. Nonetheless, the EU FMs felt overall that the EU needed to get involved. Fried suggested the EU consider specific steps to support the German plan at different stages, including tasks related to policing, border monitoring, and economic rehabilitation. Secretary Rice, was exceptionally tough with Georgian leaders during her early July trip to Tbilisi and had succeeded in bringing them around to make key concessions in Phase One of the German-drafted plan.

3. (C/NF) Cooper said CFSP High Rep Solana believed the EU should adhere to three principles for engagement: support for

Georgia's territorial integrity, support for some level of autonomy for Abkhazia, and rejection of settlement by force; "and keep repeating it." A/S Fried warned Cooper that there were signs of Russian backtracking on the first point. He pointed to a recent Medvedev letter to President Bush in which he referred to the "problem of" Georgia's territorial integrity. In the face of Russian attempts to block negotiations, the EU should consider ending visa facilitation for Abkhaz holders of Russian passports and imposing sanctions against Russians engaged in illegal investment in Abkhazia. Cooper agreed that "the problem resides in Moscow" and thought Berlin could exert powerful influence on the Kremlin by hinting at consideration of support for Georgia MAP.

PSC Ambassadors : We Want to Do More

14. (C) A/S Fried also briefed a group of ten EU Political and Security Committee (PSC) officials July 23 on Quad (UK, U.S., Germany, and France) Political Directors meeting on Georgia of July 22. He warned that the situation in Georgia was deteriorating faster than the diplomatic process could move to address it. The atmosphere is growing tenser, and one incident could trigger a downward spiral, said Fried. While the Georgians are not without blame, the Russians are the principal aggressors. He highlighted a possible danger that the Russians could misjudge U.S. and EU priorities and assume that the partners were otherwise engaged with presidential elections and getting the Treaty of Lisbon back on track and try to take advantage of that situation. It remains important to demonstrate to Moscow that the U.S. and EU share common objectives and resolve.

BRUSSELS 00001138 002 OF 002

15. (C) A/S Fried underscored U.S. support for German FM Steinmeier's engagement on Georgia and cited as a good basis for work a German paper which details three phases for engagement to reach a settlement: first, non-use of force pledges and accompanying security measures; second, confidence-building measures; and third, status issues. Fried noted that Political Directors will soon meet to flesh out the details of the first phase of the plan and suggested that the EU could play a role in the phase one activities, possibly in the shape of providing outside observers in the instance of a mutual Georgian-Abkhazian withdrawal. If the German process works, Fried foresees a Ministerial-level meeting on the margins of UNGA. He warned that if the Russians refuse to participate, we will collectively need to think about ways to ensure that Moscow pays a diplomatic price for its unwillingness to engage on finding a solution. Fried also praised a recent New Friends of Georgia grouping led by Poland and including Sweden and other nations which can intervene with Georgia in ways that other countries with different historical experiences cannot.

16. (C) In response to Fried's remarks, UK PSC Ambassador Barrow and Irish PSC Ambassador Cross highlighted recent EU internal discussions about Georgia and noted the increasing priority the member states are giving to the issue. French Deputy PSC Ambassador Chabert explained that the EU next week would take decisions on a Georgia "options paper" which discusses ways of creating security-building measures, methods of supporting the initiative to create a free trade zone and possibilities to weaken links between the Abkhazian and Russian sides. (Note: In a July 22 meeting with A/S Fried and EUR DAS Matthew Bryza, Swedish FM Carl Bildt said the European Commission's FTA proposal " did not go far enough" and that ending visa facilitation for Abkhaz Russian passport holders required passport data the EU did not currently possess, but that it was not impossible. End Note.) In response to a UK question as to whether Russia would participate in the upcoming meeting, Fried assessed that it will be hard for the Russians to avoid the event, but they likely will try to stall progress. A Finnish official questioned how long the Georgians would wait for the German

plan to yield concrete results. Fried replied that the more support we provide, the more patience we can expect. Our goal should be to extend the time frame at play by stabilizing the situation and convincing Georgians that there is no need to be in a hurry. Russian intransigence and ongoing provocations gave us cause for genuine alarm, however.

¶ 17. (C) European officials also raised questions about Russian behavior more broadly, specifically noting that while Russia's involvement on Georgia was troublesome, there were other issues where Moscow's cooperation was necessary, particularly at the UN. Fried agreed that balancing the interests would be difficult, citing as examples Russian helpfulness on Iran and intransigence on Zimbabwe. He highlighted the importance of countering Russia's perceptions that the U.S. and EU are divided in New York. Fried also addressed recent "1970s-style" proposals from Moscow on new European security architecture and urged that we start querying the Russians about the details of their ideas, specifically how this will fit in with Georgia, address energy policies, and relate to the existing security structures in Europe.

¶ 18. (C) Irish and Czech PSC Ambassadors requested A/S Fried's assessment of the impact of Georgian and Ukrainian bids to join NATO. On Georgia, Fried noted that the decisions made at Bucharest were ambiguous enough to give Russians a chance to negatively intervene. Russia is relieved by the political turmoil in Ukraine, said Fried, and it is clear that Moscow will continue to try to exert pressure there. Although it is a long road to full NATO membership for Georgia and Ukraine, Fried underscored the importance of not permitting Russia to draw a line in Europe.

¶ 19. (U) ER A/S Fried did not have the opportunity to clear this message before departing post.

SILVERBERG

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